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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

Quality Guides for Buying a Winter Coat

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

A dialogue between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Morse Salisbury, Radio Service, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Thursday, August 6, 1936.

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MR. SALISBURY: Well, Ruth, what's the timely topic on your Household Calendar today?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Winter coats -- suggestions about buying a nice, warm winter coat with a big fur collar, maybe, to turn up around the ears.

MR. SALISBURY: You call that a timely topic. A winter coat with a fur collar on an August dog day like this?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Morse, I'm afraid you aren't a window shopper and a newspaper reader. You haven't observed, evidently, that August is the month when lots of the stores feature women's winter coats. So regardless of what the temperature is down on the street, I know lots of women who are thinking about winter coats. There, have I convinced you that the Bureau of Home Economics brought out this new leaflet on "Quality guides in buying women's cloth coats" just in the nick of time?

MR. SALISBURY: You have. As usual, the lady wins the argument. And just to show you I hold no grudge I'll announce the number and title of that new leaflet if you want me to.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, thank you. Please do.

MR. SALISBURY: This new leaflet is called "Quality guides in buying women's cloth coats", and the number is 117 in the Department of Agriculture series.

MISS VAN DEMAN: And the author is Clarice Scott of our Textile and Clothing Division. Miss Scott's on her vacation, so she doesn't know that I'm taking her name in vain today on the Farm and Home Hour.

Now, let me give you just a few of the points that Miss Scott thinks are important when you buy a coat.

First, some of the general ideas that count a lot in the comfort and service you get from a coat. And incidentally these are the ones that we sometimes forget when we go into the store and an intriguing fur collar, or a tricky new sleeve, or the latest novelty fabric, catches our fancy.

The chief purpose of a winter coat is to keep you warm. So look for materials that will keep out cold and hold in the heat of your own body.

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And look for a style that you can fasten up snugly around the throat. And sleeves that fit closely at the wrist. And a wide lap in front that will protect you when you're out in a blizzard in January.

And don't be misled by the weight of a coat. The heaviest is not necessarily the warmest. The warmth of a coat depends on features of the design, such as the two or three I've just mentioned, as well as on the kind of fabrics used all through. You have to take into account the lining and the interlining, as well as the outer cloth.

MR. SALISBURY: Aren't there any labels to help?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Not very many of what you could call informative labels. A few coat fabrics are labeled all-wool, and are all wool. And some linings carry a guarantee "to wear the life of the garment", or to be "perspiration proof" or "respiration stain resistant". Then there are some tags on interlinings to tell what they are made of.

MR. SALISBURY: But in general the labels on women's coats are few and far between.

MISS VAN DEMAN: That's the situation exactly. And it's unfortunate for everybody concerned -- the stores that sell coats as well as the women who buy. So much of the material and workmanship that indicates quality is hidden. Only the manufacturer, who makes the coat has the answer to a lot of the questions a woman asks when she's trying to make an intelligent selection.

MR. SALISBURY: Yes, I suppose it takes a textile expert to distinguish quality even in the all wool fabrics.

MISS VAN DEMAN: You are right it does. For instance, there are the high-quality worsteds made of the long, strong fibers. The worsteds have luster, and spring, and can stand sun and rain and all kinds of use and even abuse. Then there are the good-quality woolens. They make some of the best coatings for general and sports wear. And at the bottom of the scale are the poor-quality goods. They include the woolens made of fibers that have been reworked until they are stubby, and harsh, and have lost the very qualities for which we value wool. These poor-quality coat fabrics feel stiff and boardy, and they are heavy without being warm. When they get wet and wrinkled, the wrinkles don't shake out and the coat is likely to bag and stretch out of shape.

Anybody who wants a good wearing coat material should look for one made of strong, elastic wool fibers, with a firm well-balanced weave. And make sure that it is preshrunk and color fast to sun and rain and dry cleaning.

Well, Miss Scott has a great deal more than this to say about coats in her new leaflet. She's packed in facts about fabrics, and workmanship and pressing, and fur trim, and even about the buttons and fastenings. But I know by your expression, Morse, that time's up. Hope nobody's been overcome on this warm day by the subject of warm winter coats. Goodbye until next week.

MR. SALISBURY: (Repeat announcement of leaflet)

